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# Bureau defends way it handled Pelton, Miller

By William M. Baker

Two recent items in your paper (presented) significant misperceptions. These misperceptions were particularly disappointing since they involved the investigations and prosecutions of Ronald Pelton and Richard Miller on espionage charges, two cases which I know were professionally handled by the FBI and the U.S. intelligence community.

Your June 8 editorial, "A case of cloak and slapstick," leads the reader to believe that Ronald Pelton worked for the National Security Agency (NSA) for five years, blatantly giving away the nation's secrets, and was not identified as a Soviet spy until Vitaly Yurchenko handed him to us on a platter. It also implies that Pelton's myriad problems were so evident during this period that they should have easily caught the eye of responsible personnel security officers.

What you failed to mention was that with the exception of his filing for bankruptcy three months prior to quitting his job, Pelton's extraordinary personal problems all began after he terminated his employment with NSA, which was almost seven years ago. The FBI conducted an extensive investigation in January, 1980, in an effort to identify the individual who walked into the Soviet

## Point of view

Embassy, and it was this investigation which enabled us to identify Pelton.

Yurchenko did not furnish Pelton's identity, and it was only through information developed in the 1980 investigation and our ability to connect our findings in that investigation with the facts provided by Yurchenko that we were able to identify Pelton, obtain his confession and support his successful prosecution.

The story by Bill Girdner in your June 16 edition concerning the closing arguments in the Richard Miller trial is an overall negative recitation, denigrating the importance and difficulty of an investigation and prosecution which the FBI regarded as most important. One paragraph in the article centers on testimony given at the trial about Miller's difficulties, including an allegation that Miller "sold Tupperware out of the back of his FBI car . . ."

Despite the fact that this accusation has appeared in other papers, there was no testimony at either of the Miller trials alleging he had been selling Tupperware from his government automobile. Testimony was given by one of Miller's former supervisors that Miller was confronted about the unauthorized use of a government vehicle in the sale of Amway products; however, further testimony showed there was no evidence to substantiate the allegation, which Miller also denied.

I can assure you, had there been evidence of illegal activity on Miller's part, it would have been appropriately further addressed by his superiors. The FBI demonstrated both persistence and integrity in pursuing the investigation and prosecution of Miller, and we would have appreciated some acknowledgment of the fact that our early detection of his activities minimized the substantial damage to our national security which would have occurred if his activities had gone undetected for a long period of time.

You may be unaware that there are over 4,000 diplomatic and commercial officials from communist countries stationed in the United States. The Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies account for about 2,500 of these. Our experience shows that approximately one-third of these officials are affiliated with the intelligence services of their home countries. We can also expect to see more than 16,000 students and about 90,000 visitors each year from these countries. Finally, there are over 4 million people in this country with approved access to classified information.

In spite of these formidable odds, since 1965 we have arrested 55 individuals on espionage charges.

Your editorial on the Pelton case mentions the media's concern about possible infringement of 1st amendment rights. We share that concern, and take pride in knowing our counterintelligence and personnel security programs respect the rights of all Americans guaranteed by the Constitution. The easy solutions to detecting espionage activity which your editorial suggests exist would necessarily disrespect those rights. We are consistently mindful of the futility involved in protecting our country at the expense of the most basic values for which it stands.

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